

Social movement web use in theory and practice: a content analysis of US movement websites

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While communication scholars suggest that the internet can serve as an important resource for social movement communication, few studies examine whether and how social movements actually use the internet. This article examines US-based social movement organization (SMO) internet use at one of its most visible points of access, the world wide web. Drawing on alternative media studies, the article develops a typology of communication functions central to social movements and surveys a random sample of SMO websites in order to determine whether and to what degree they exhibit features or attributes related to these types. The survey results suggest that the majority of US-based SMOs are not utilizing the web to its full potential, and posits a number of reasons why this might be the case, including organizational objectives, organizational resources and resource sharing.

Key Words: alternative media • content analysis • internet • social movements • world wide web

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